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TWO WORLDS

A Layman's Idea of God

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MAN AND THE TWO WORLDS

A Layman's Idea of God

By
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MAN AND THE TWO WORLDS

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INTRODUCTION

THE following chapters have been written by two men who have been friends from childhood. Both are university bred, both have had professional training, and at the present time they are both engaged in pursuing active business careers. Both have read rather extensively on philosophical and religious subjects and both are intensely interested in the study of their environment and of the human existence of which they are a part. Both have been possessed by the same craving to spell out some answer to the great riddle of human life.

In this endeavor each has experienced the same reaction from con-

ventional religious and social formulas, and finally, in their persistent groping for light, both have arrived at certain definite and, they believe, satisfying conclusions.

So thoroughly have they discussed with each other every idea here expressed that it is as if this book were the product of one mind.

In order to have no barrier of technical phrases, scientific and theological expressions, they have tried to employ the simplest and clearest language. They have tried to avoid the ponderous and technical style often used by writers on philosophical subjects. A true philosophy should be, they believe, so commonsense, practical, and simple that it would appeal to any thoughtful person.

The writers have every respect for the beliefs of others, provided they have thought things out for themselves in all sincerity, free and untrammeled from the dogmatic assertions of traditional religions or schools of belief. They claim a similar courtesy and generosity from their readers.

They do not believe that any priesthood or any sacerdotal establishment is necessary to interpret things divine to human consciousness. They believe that whatever divine revelation there is is made from God direct to the individual, without the interpellation of any ecclesiastical medium. They disbelieve in the possession of any power of this sort by any ecclesiastical system whatever. They be-

lieve that the divine spirit influences the soul of human beings as music or art appeals to their senses; that the divine message is like the waves of sound upon a sounding board, that the more sensitively attuned the soul-sounding-board of man is to this influence, the truer and clearer is the impression received.

A man has every right to read the thoughts of others, to study the religious beliefs of others and the writings of those who discuss these subjects, but the writers protest against any intelligent thinker accepting the conclusions of others against his own intuitive and natural ideas. No one with an alert mind should accept unquestioningly the doctrines of others or allow anyone else to do his thinking for

him. The writers believe that this is one of the colossal and devastating mistakes that most religions have made. Certainly the Christian Church, through all the ages, has erred grievously in its persistence in handing out to its lay members the predigested and dogmatic dicta of its prelates. Nothing has so shackled and discouraged original thought and inquiry along these lines as the attitude of the Church in this respect.

The fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion are perfectly simple and easy to understand and are at the disposal of all. But the fathers of the Church have, through the centuries, built up such vast libraries of theology and man-made laws and opinions and customs and doctrines that the simple and common-

sense teachings of Christ are buried beneath them.

It is the same with other religions. An aristocracy of priests has raised mysteries where no mystery should be, its members have clothed themselves with power and prestige in order to secure them in their calling and increase their influence. They have attributed elements of magic, euphemistically called miracles, to the career and teachings of the founder where he himself claimed no such thing. If we search back through all this mass of ceremony and doctrine to the origin of the religion, we find a simplicity and a sincerity far more effective and helpful to human hearts than the elaborated systems of succeeding interpreters.

In other words, we deny the necessity of any professional medium between man and God.

It is not our desire or intention, however, to weaken the influence of any existing system of religion. That is entirely foreign to the plan of this book. We believe, on the one hand, that every man has a right to his own sincere beliefs and that those beliefs, if they satisfy him, should be accorded the fullest respect. On the other hand, we believe that no man, priest or layman, should think that any other man is in error simply because he has a different belief. If a man believes in less than you do, you should not consider him skeptical; if he believes in more than you do, you should not consider him superstitious.

The authors are not asking anyone to accept these ideas; they are not attempting to introduce a new theology. Certainly they are not attempting to tear down any. But for many years they have been extremely dissatisfied with the conventional lines of thought. Orthodoxy has brought them no conviction. They cannot reconcile any existing mode of religious belief with certain existing conditions of life. They have worked out the following ideas fully conscious of their own limitations. They seek no converts, they claim no seership other than that of earnest seekers after light. If they have dared to break away from certain teachings which are usually considered fundamental bases of belief, if they seem to deny

certain teachings which are regarded as the roots of faith, they can only say that they have not done so out of bravado, but because they find, in their own conception of certain mysteries, far more spiritual comfort and intellectual understanding and harmony than they ever had before.

In other words, this book does not claim to be anything but a record of a search after truth of two congenial, inquiring minds which have sincerely tried to think things out for themselves.

MAN AND THE TWO WORLDS

A Layman's Idea of God

CHAPTER I

ANYONE of an inquiring type of mind cannot but be fascinated by certain problems of life which have never been, and which, perhaps, never can be, explained. Yet, the more one thinks about them the more alluring they become. One always has the feeling that he may at least solve some phases of them to his own satisfaction. The idea of God is surely the most absorbing of all. The creation of the universe, the reason for its existence, the purpose of our own human lives, the question of personal immortality, are prob-

lems which men have been wondering about ever since they began to think.

Science has never solved these problems, theology claims to have done so, but has presented arguments and assertions rather than proofs, and philosophy merely advances theories which may or may not appeal to one. The scientist is, perhaps, wiser than the theologian or the philosopher in that he does not attempt to explain anything except on a basis of fact. He is content with that which can be reasonably proved. The theologian attempts to compel belief in his theories by dogmatic statements which he claims it is impious to question. He conjures up a state of mind which he calls "faith," endues it with mystical qualities to appeal to one's sense of

romance or fear or longing for peace of mind, and then demands that the layman shall subordinate his reason to his emotions in order to acquire this purely artificial attitude. This method of the theologian does not appeal to one who is not satisfied to have his thinking done for him by another. The philosopher appeals to one's reason, but the reasoning qualities of human minds are so diversified that what seems reasonable to one type seems unreasonable to another. No two human minds in the world are alike in their workings, and consequently it is perhaps natural to conclude that there is no such thing as pure reason which is not built upon a solid basis of facts; and as the problems we are now discussing have only revealed those facts in differ-

ent degrees to different minds, there can be no one process of reasoning which will satisfy all types of minds.

Therefore, if one has the type of mind which is not content to let another do his thinking for him, the best he can do is to study the results of the thinking of other congenial types of mind, take that which appeals to him, reject that which does not, and build up for himself his own theories. If he thus ultimately wins some measure of contentment he is indeed a happy man. But in order to remain happy he must not demand that other thinking minds which necessarily have different methods and qualities from his own should accept his conclusions. The best that he can expect is that he may be of some slight help to such kindred

minds as can find something of comfort or of inspiration in the conclusions he has reached. For, after all, each must blaze his own trail and learn some little of the vast forests of speculative thought, so that he may not feel an utter wanderer in them, with a lost starting place and no discernible destination. He may perhaps learn some little of the beauties and wonders crowding about him on all sides and even grow to love them. And if he feels that he is on the right path for him himself to travel and can see the light of the journey's end in the distance, ah! what a glorious pilgrimage!

For many years I have been wandering in this forest of speculative thought, which I entered when I began to realize that the religious teach-

ings of my youth no longer satisfied me and discovered that it was necessary to my own peace of mind to think things out for myself. Pilgrim in his progress bore upon his back the heavy burden of sin, but I bore a heavier handicap—the burden of what I now believe to be the mistaken teachings of a conventional orthodoxy of belief which I have had the greatest difficulty in throwing off. Pilgrim bore his burden upon his back, but I, unhappily, carried mine before my eyes so that all I saw was distorted and misleading. So my wanderings were long and arduous, my path a difficult and unhappy one. But I have succeeded in releasing myself from my burden and I see a light ahead which brings me infinite comfort. I find, with this

new and clearer vision, new beauties all about me.

I am setting down this record of my mental and spiritual progress in the hope that the trail I have blazed for myself may be of some help to other congenial minds who are working their own way toward the light which is surely there.

Perhaps the first step toward personal freedom of thought which I took was the realization that the idea of God as presented by my religious teachers no longer satisfied me. This idea was largely that of the Old Testament, taken literally and without the added enlightenment that should, I thought, have come by centuries of culture. There was little added idealism, or larger or more discerning vision, than that of the prim-

itive writers of the Old Testament who lived thousands of years ago when the world was young. Had human thought or experience nothing to add to theirs? In every other line of investigation there had been more or less consistent advance. Why not here?

Take the idea of God, for instance. The conception of him as taught me in my youth was substantially that which was taught the youth of the wandering nomads in the tent villages of the pastoral land of ancient Syria thousands of years before Solomon built his first temple. It was a conception of a purely tribal deity. God at that time evidently interested himself exclusively in the careers of a chosen people in one little corner of Asia Minor and let the rest of the

world go hang. And he regulated all the rest of the universe so that it should serve them—the sun to shine upon them by day, and the moon and stars by night. He took an intense personal, almost impertinent interest in their daily affairs, revealed himself to them in the form of a burning bush and otherwise, was angry when they did not obey him, and demanded constant flattery and quaint sacrifices of his dumb creatures, by altar fire, to bring him back into good humor again.

In other words, the ancient Hebraic conception, from which ministers of the Christian Church could not seem to free themselves, was of a God quick to anger and jealousy, conceited, demanding constant praise and glorification, intemperate

in his passions, and, for some reason or another, forgetful of his duties to other peoples quite as highly developed as the Hebrews. This seemed to me a natural enough conception of God for a people as primitive as the ancient Hebrews, but not for us who have had the benefit of thousands of years of experience and a steady growth of knowledge of life. The Jehovah of ancient Israel could not be, I found, my God. It was natural that these ingenuous chroniclers should picture a god who utterly neglected such interesting contemporary civilizations as those of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, India, and China, but as these peoples, who were quite as civilized and cultured as the Hebrews, seemed to be getting along in the world very well indeed

with their own so-called false gods, would it not be well to inquire a little into them and see why the light should have been so excluded from their vision? What is the test of a false god and a true one?

This led me to the study of other beliefs and religious systems and schools of philosophy. I soon learned that there were two general classes of theories:

1. Religious philosophy.
2. Lay philosophy.

The former might be described as a system of belief built up by emotional and poetic appeals to man's nature, a system of faith without proof, usually inoculated with magic, mysticism, and phantasmagoria, nurtured and developed by priests who played upon the imagination of their

followers, oftentimes with entire sincerity and oftentimes in order to increase and perpetuate their power.

The latter class of theories were evolved by cold, intellectual, and more or less logical applications of human reason to the problems of the creation and government of the world. Such schools, for instance, as the Eleatic, Pythagorean, Platonic, and Epicurean were perhaps logical enough in their building, but they started from some purely illogical or arbitrary premise, such as the idea that fire was the first cause or that creation was simply the fortuitous concourse of atoms. These schools, having no emotional appeal, were merely interesting forums for academic discussion which got nowhere.

Religion can no more exist and satisfy by an appeal merely to one's mentality than it can by an appeal exclusively to one's emotions. Philosophy does not include religion, but a true religion must include philosophy.

A study of other religions convinced me that they all had many points of similarity and that certain fundamental principles pervaded them all. It is a tendency of the human mind to require a symbol for whatever it cannot understand. It longs for something definite for the imagination to fix upon when the idea is indefinite, for we are finite creatures and can imagine the infinite only in a vague way. So, in all religions, God was pictured more or less in the image of man. He be-

came, as the philosophers say, anthropomorphic. The Hebrew writers, however, put it backward. They said that God created man in his own image.

Practically all religions agreed with the Hebrew teachings that God—whether he were called Jehovah or Brahma or Osiris or Ormuz or Allah or what not, made something out of nothing. And almost as universal as the belief that God was the creator was the belief that he was infinitely good. True, certain manifestations of him did not seem to show a very high quality of goodness, but that was because the chroniclers themselves did not have a very lofty conception of goodness. God was theoretically good, at any rate. In fact, the interpreters of

God were so anxious to clothe him with entire holiness that it has been the almost constant and universal effort of religious teachers to relieve him of all responsibility for evil in the world by attributing evil to lesser gods. Diabolism, the belief in and propitiation of evil spirits, is a part of all religions. In the Hebrew and Christian religions, for instance, we have the devil, the worker of evil, and in Hinduism we have a supreme god, Brahm, whose qualities of good and evil were delegated to two lesser divinities, Vishnu the preserver, and Siva the destroyer. Still, since God was infinitely powerful and the creator of everything, I never could see how he could escape the responsibility of the existence of evil by

merely putting it off on the shoulders of associate or lesser deities. And no religion ever gave me a satisfactory explanation of this paradox. This paradox is unescapable in Christianity. Milton definitely expresses the idea that the hordes of Satan are servants of God, their creator, and they must gain his permission before they can use their powers. The devil seems to be generally recognized as a distinct, personal source of evil, administering it with ingenuity and tireless energy. The general plan of most religions, certainly of Christianized Hebrewism, was that God was infinitely powerful and infinitely good. Except for the Agnostics, whose attitude is merely a shrug of the shoulders, who have got nowhere and do not mind admitting

it, and the atheists, who are worse than useless because they tear down and do not upbuild, who claim to deny what it is innate in the human heart to believe, mankind has, through all the ages, in one way or another, expressed this belief.

I soon found, therefore, what appeared to be a hopeless contradiction in my religious teachings. How could an omnipotent God who was infinitely good allow, for an instant, so much fearful agony and mental and physical pain to be borne by his beloved children, created in his own likeness? No explanation of any religion or philosophy could satisfy me in the least. I was assured that we were still in the process of making, and that, in time, evil and suffering would be conquered. But the in-

evitable question arose, why should this process be so long drawn out and so excruciatingly painful? Why should it, indeed, be necessary at all? Countless millions of God's creatures, both brute and human, have been allowed to suffer, through countless generations, every form of misery imaginable. We are a prey to heat and cold and disease and the attacks of savage animals and the even crueler attacks of our fellows, to evil passions and worry and fear and hatred. We have an inherent longing to know the real meaning of life; we have an inherent thirst for truth without, it would seem, the opportunity of slaking it. Why?

Most confusing of all is the belief that God not only countenances the presence of all this suffering, but de-

liberately endued his creatures with an excruciatingly acute capacity to be affected by it. Innumerable examples of this seemingly needless agony that is a part of our life could be cited. Take the case, for instance, of a young mother whose little girl is critically ill. Think of the hours of frightful suspense, the frantic efforts to save her, and finally the shock of grief and despair when death comes. The woman has, let us suppose, been a dutiful mother, a good woman, living her life with the highest sense of her obligations. Through no fault of her own, for no reason that we can discover, she is thus horribly punished. Again, why should a good God allow a great city like Pompeii to be built up, a highly civilized colony of industrious people

to be living there, following their useful pursuits, and then, by an unexpected act of violence on the part of nature, have it destroyed and the inhabitants killed or driven from their homes under the fiery torrent from Vesuvius?

If the infinite God is good, why should a great ship full of people, many of them valuable members of society, be annihilated at sea? Why should disease spread its world-wide curse of suffering? Why should the strong oppress the weak and nation rise against nation? Countless millions of parents have asked why should their dear sons, whom they have so lovingly reared, have to lose their lives in the Great War? Has not every human soul had cause to cry out, perhaps many times in the

course of life, "What have I done that I should be so pitilessly punished?" And has there ever been a satisfying answer given? What real comfort can any minister or priest of any religion ever give? He can vaguely assure us that we cannot understand God's infinite plan, that he loves us and that all is for the best, but nothing can explain to the broken heart the seeming heartlessness of it all.

Having thus been brought face to face with these problems which conventional religion failed to answer for me, I came upon another which equally baffled me—the colossal waste of nature. Take, for example, the little fish, with its exquisite mechanism, furtively seeking to preserve its life in the vast depths of the un-

friendly sea. Think of its delicately articulated anatomy, its exquisite muscular, nervous, and circulatory systems. After it is so carefully fashioned it is swallowed, to be taken apart by nature's chemistry merely to serve as sustenance for another fish which is speedily devoured by a still larger one. Why should not a less highly organized plant serve as food? A tree will, because of the rapacity of its roots which suck dry the earth about it, and of its leaves which exclude the sunlight about its base, dwarf and kill the plants which have sprung up about it. A great scientist, on the eve of a discovery which would be of benefit to the human race, will have his life snuffed out by some invisible germ which could have thrived equally upon a plant

fungus. Contrary to the simplest laws of economy, the more highly organized a thing is, the greater is its mortality. A rock lasts unchanged and unharmed for ages, a living tree withers and dies in a few years, animals live short lives constantly exposed to dangers, and a human being is a prey to every imaginable disease and accident. What would we say of an army system that put the lives of the most highly trained and experienced officers in the first line of battle and sheltered the rank and file in places of the greatest safety?

The only answer that conventional religion vouchsafed me to this line of inquiry was that we should not attribute these misfortunes and this uneconomic system of waste to God,

that they are the work of the destroying power of evil spirits, that things would be far worse if it were not for God's help, and that only through his help and guidance can we combat and eventually overcome these misfortunes. Yet always the thought arose in me, if God is good and all-powerful, why should he allow these powers of evil to exist and to work such havoc? Why should he allow the beloved children of his own creation to be so tormented?

I naturally began to inquire of myself, since there was nothing in either lay or religious philosophy that could satisfactorily answer for me these questions, does it follow that they cannot be answered? Is the human mind incapable of solving the problems or has it been unable to solve

them because it has built up all its reasoning, based all its speculations, upon false premises? Has there been some invisible system of fetters which it either has not dared to throw off or known how to? I was always taught to accept these premises unquestioningly, and it never occurred to me to question them. I had been taught to believe that there were only two possible theories: either there is a God of infinite power and goodness who created and controls the world, or there is no God whatever and the world, fortuitously called into being, rolls along blindly and without reason, carrying human life with it to no destination. People who believe in the first theory believe in some form of religion; people who believe in the second have no place

for religion in their conception of life.

After I had started on the long, personal quest after truths that should satisfy me I began to realize that I could not accept the first theory because, upon analysis, it seemed to be composed of the following contradictory terms:

1. God created the world (the material universe);

2. He is omnipotent;

3. He is infinitely good.

Hence it follows that, since God created everything and since evil of every imaginable description undoubtedly exists in the world, he created the powers of evil, and since he is omnipotent he allows those powers of evil to work their destruction not only in the realm of

inanimate nature, but also among his sentient creatures whom he has endued with a capacity for suffering, physical, mental, and spiritual, which is intense. How, then, can he be infinitely good?

To allow the powers of evil to work among inanimate things is merely bad economics, wasteful and not in keeping with the all-wise character attributed to God; but the irreconcilable element appears to an utterly confounding and confusing degree when we find the powers of evil allowed to work among his creatures to whom he gave the capacity for suffering. Here, it seemed to me, was a preposterous and outrageous cruelty utterly at variance with a conception of a benign creator. Yet, in the Christian

Church, the very first article of faith is, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth"! And this is what every Christian child is taught at his mother's knee!

I realized that the above three postulates are fundamental elements of a belief in God, not only in the Christian, but, substantially, in other religions. Since, to me, they contain a hopeless contradiction, how can I escape accepting the alternative theory that there is no God? I found, however, that while the first theory presented a hopeless contradiction, so hopeless that I could not accept it, the second theory was utterly repugnant and repellant to me. A disbelief in God seemed directly against all the longings and

ideals of human nature and contrary to a divine aspiration surely within us, an unmistakable token of some divine source. I could understand how many men, yielding to their mental requirement for logic, could be driven into atheism because it seemed the only alternative to the first fallacious theory. Yet I could not believe that, deep down in their souls, in what is sometimes vaguely called the inner consciousness, the true self, they really eliminated him. They thought, perhaps, that they did not believe in him, but the thought never got beyond their logical faculties. All thoughtful people must indeed be puzzled by the first theory and many who have clung to their belief have only done so by yielding blindly to the more or

less specious appeals to faith by organized religions and their own emotional longings after their heart's desire.

My long period of mental and spiritual travail was due to the fact that I could not yield to this longing because of the contradiction in the theory of God which was so generally agreed upon, and yet everything within me revolted against atheism. The forest in which I wandered was indeed dark, and my vision was obscured so that all objects were distorted. It was not until it occurred to me to attack the fallacy in the first theory and I began to blaze my own trail that I gained a glimmering of the light that lay so far ahead.

CHAPTER II

CERTAIN questions kept recurring to me with ever-increasing insistence.

Has any religion a right to claim that it is impious to question its doctrines? Have the accredited leaders of a religion a right to claim that they have privileges and powers not given to lay members? Have they a right to teach that any explanations of the spiritual mysteries of life can come only from or through them? A teacher of science realizes the vast possibilities of the development of his subject and it is his aim to pass on to his pupils the benefits of his own knowledge and experience, so that they may carry the work on to new

discoveries. Imagine an artist, for example, or an architect, telling his pupils that there is nothing new to learn in composition or building construction, and that their sole duty is the study of the old masters or of archæology! In art, discoveries by photography have made possible a new vision of bodies in motion, of light and shade; in architecture, modern engineering has caused an enormous growth of architectural skill. Mathematics, chemistry, surgery have all grown steadily because of the growth of general knowledge. There can be no progress in other lines of human interest without original thought adding continually to the light of the experience and the discoveries of one's predecessors. Columbus studied the geography of Ptolemy,

but if he had been content to go backward "toward the source," and had believed in its limitations, would he have discovered a new world?

Have our religious teachers a right to be the only ones to take the opposite attitude? Why should any attempt to seek a clearer light in their sphere be considered a sinful heresy? Why should we not be allowed to question the teachings of the elders and the faith of our fathers, in order to enrich and clarify their views in the light of our experience? Why should the layman be held loyal only when he looks always backward and never to the present or future? Yet that is the attitude of religious teachers everywhere in the world. What has happened to those who have dared to break away from

orthodoxy? Countless thousands, like Savonarola, have been burned at the stake. Thousands of others have known the torture of the thumbscrew and the rack and the hatred of their own people. Persecution for attempted originality of thought has existed in all religions and in religions only, except, perhaps, in politics, where the safety of the state was concerned. One has but to recall the sufferings of the early Christians, the advancement of whose cause, in spite of the punishments of pagan Rome, brought about the twilight of the gods of Olympus; and in Christianity itself the Dark Ages are dark indeed with the bloody records of the Inquisition of Gregory IX and Torquemada and of a bigotry of horrible ferocity. Christ

himself, because he dared to cry out against the eternal negations, the "thou shalt not" restrictions of Moses, and to offer his splendid encouragement to do rather than not to do, because his spiritual teachings were persistently misconstrued and given a material interpretation, was persecuted and made to pay with his life for his intolerance of dogmatism. Even in the enlightened America of today we are from time to time edified by accounts of heresy trials of forward-looking and sincere thinkers who are irked by the shackles of their sectarian creeds.

And the priests themselves, having been taught the necessity of following blindly the doctrines of their faith, have been robbed of the power of original thought. Established

doctrines were crowned with a halo of sacredness. They must not be questioned. The teachings of the fathers were of a truth that could not be added to. So all our mental processes, as applied to religion, have, from earliest infancy, been directed into narrow and unelastic channels and the influence of primitive minds has held its sway.

What would have happened to science if Galileo and Columbus and Isaac Newton and Darwin and Herbert Spencer had not dared to think for themselves? But in religion, theories of divine action, considered orthodox by the religious teachers of any age, have been accepted by them just as they came from their forefathers of a previous age. So these theories have always been founded

upon a conception of natural laws which advancing knowledge is continually proving erroneous. The religious teachers have always been notoriously intolerant of the discoveries of science and fearful of all speculative thought lest it rob them of their arguments and obscure the vision of God. Yet why should not the vision of God be made clearer by the increase of human enlightenment, as is our vision of everything else in life?

In my own case, when I began to struggle with the paradox in the accepted theory of God I found a curious inability for conscientious and untrammeled thought. I had inherited the teachings of the ages and my mind had been confined in an unyielding armor of preconceived

belief. I could not start to think from a beginning. A platform had been built for me, and it was, as I thought, of adamant. When I found, however, that I could not build a structure of faith that was satisfying to me upon the platform, I finally began seriously to consider the platform itself.

Perhaps the best way to explain how completely a prisoner I was, how completely my mind was held in the thrall of the teachings of my most impressionable years, will be for me to indulge for a moment in an allegory.

Let us imagine a youth brought up in a lonely valley surrounded by inaccessible mountains. He and his fellow valley dwellers have, for generations, lived in the belief that there was no world beyond their own little village, their own farms and pas-

tures and forests. No conception of a greater world had ever entered their minds. Or, if it had, public opinion had so fiercely condemned them in those thoughts that they had not dared to dwell upon them. Their methods of life, their religion, and their general view of life had all been built on the foundation of belief that their little isolated colony covered the extent of human history. Sometimes, however, while the youth, in an upper meadow, would be guarding his flocks, he would notice strong-winged birds soaring beyond the mountain crests, and a strange, groping conjecture of something existing outside his valley would come into his mind. And one day he hears, far aloft, a strange sound, and, looking up, he beholds an airplane winging

its way across the infinite blue. A man, a human being like himself, waves his hand, then the strange winged thing lessens rapidly in the distance and passes out of sight beyond the mountain rim. A token of another world! Can it be possible that the foundations of his thoughts are false ones? Dazed and thrilled with an utterly new conception of life, he never rests till one day he dares to scale the heights walling him in, and the greater outer world bursts upon his astonished view.

"Like stout Cortez when, with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise
Silent upon a peak in Darien."

Had I not, I began to wonder, had not most of us, been mentally confined for ages in a constricting valley from which we had been unable or afraid to fare forth, a valley surrounded with rocky walls of bigotry and dogma and convention? Why should I not at least attempt to scale the walls and see if there were not a larger world outside? Would the high, winged thought ever swim within my ken like the airplane to the shepherd youth? Was not the eternal contradiction in the theory of God the result of clinging with too much loyalty to doctrines established when human thought was in its infancy? I believed that I had every right to throw off the thrall of inherited beliefs. I grew to believe that the attitude of religious

teachers toward modern enlightenment was wrong, that the Church had no right to claim exclusive powers in its interpretation of Deity, to consider its conception of him authoritative and to impede me in my attempt to form my own ideas. I determined to start fresh and to obtain, if possible, an idea of God that should at least satisfy myself.

CHAPTER III

UP to this point in my study of religious teachings I found no comfort because of their fallacies and these fallacies seemed to grow greater the more I studied them. I could find no answer to my questions, no solace for my doubts. I realized that destructive criticism is of no value unless it clears the way for something constructive, and, so far, my questionings had led me away from a belief in God. I found that it was absolutely impossible for me to believe in the only idea of God that had ever been unfolded to me in my religion, an idea substantially followed by other religions. Yet I felt absolutely sure that there was a

belief which would be satisfying if I could only find it. So there was nothing to do but examine the existing belief and perhaps find what was the trouble with it.

Returning, then, to the original fundamentals:

1. God created the world (meaning, of course, the material universe);
2. He is omnipotent;
3. He is infinitely good.

In these fundamental postulates of religion there are used certain definite terms. Let us study these terms and see what we really know about them. What do we mean by "God," what do we mean by "creating," what do we mean by the "material world," and what do we mean by the term "infinitely good"? Let us consider them in their inverse order, so that

we can arrive at the most important one of them all, which is the subject of these studies, with the other ones, so far as possible, defined.

The term "infinitely good" naturally eliminates every element of evil. Evil can neither enter into nor go out from it. It can have no influence whatever upon it. Everything which results from such a cause must be good. If something which is infinitely good is of any influence upon something which is evil, that influence must be wholly good and the evil must be lessened. The stronger the influence, the more will the evil be lessened and the longer will the influence last. If the effect of something which is infinitely good be of less force than that which is evil, evil will ultimately win, and

vice versa. These statements seem axiomatic, and the term "infinitely good" seems to be defined sufficiently for our purpose.

What do we mean by the world? There is the world of matter, or the physical universe, and presumably the world of spirit. In this case the world of matter is the one evidently referred to. This record of a search after truth does not in the least attempt to explain everything. It is merely a record of deductions which I have drawn from a study of certain obvious facts and which has brought to me certain definite conclusions. There are many things which the human mind is incapable of grasping. Some of these things it were not only useless for us to try to understand, but unnecessary. They have no

importance in relation to the question of a concept of God. We can only think of the universe, for instance, in terms of time and space, which are only two of its component parts. There may be more. Who or what started time in its orderly procession? What was there before the hours and days and years and centuries started their rhythmic march and what will there be when that march stops and time ceases to be? What is beyond the borders of the universe? Nothingness? And how far does that nothingness extend? And what then, beyond that? And what is that nothingness? Einstein has a theory—that is, I think he has, though I do not attempt to understand him—that the curved ray of light deduces a limited universe,

but that does not answer the question as to what is beyond it in the illimitable. He seems to have a theory also in regard to time—"everything is." At least, the theory that any one point of time occurs at different points of time in different parts of the universe is a metaphysical corollary to his mathematics. But it seems to me he strives to enter a realm of thought the subtleties of which are of no practical help to a rational theory of life.

I am contented to realize that matter exists. The Berkeleyan theory that matter is merely the imaginings of one's mind is only playing with words. So far as we are concerned, matter is a practical reality. The results of human knowledge tell us

that certain solids, in the form of planets and stars and constellations, have emerged from gases, and that our own world, similarly formed, has gradually developed into the globe which we know, with continents of land and seas of water and plant and animal life, which seem to be slowly developing from primitive to more highly developed form. Human knowledge, however, does not account for the presence of the original gases or for the components of the material universe. It does not know that these original gases had not, in a still earlier era, been solids and so on back indefinitely. As to matter outside of this world, we have only feeble glimpses which are stimulating to all kinds of theorizing and speculation. As to its beginning

and end, that will be considered later.

These two terms are defined sufficiently for our purpose. But the term "to create" is more difficult. We really cannot grasp the meaning of the verb at all. We can imagine assembling certain created things, so that they will take some other form, but we cannot imagine what it is to create something out of nothing. How can any number of nothings make a something? So it is evident that the term is employed to beg the question of the origin of matter. It is a subterfuge, an attempt to explain the unexplainable. It belongs to theology rather than to science. It is more than inaccurate; it is misleading. It implies a miracle, and a miracle has no place in sincere,

logical thought. So we will use it only under protest, with mental reservations.

This brings us to the supreme question, what is God?

Can we gain any satisfying conception of him by harking back to the past either of our own or of other religions? A past filled with bigotry and superstition and intolerance and ignorance? Why go back, for enlightenment, up the stream of experience and civilization which grows ever smaller and more muddied as it nears its emergence from crude and primitive times? Should we not look, instead, to the present and the future, to clearer and wider waters, to times of greater experience and understanding? The immediate past shows us intolerance and a theo-

logical hostility to all advances of science. The Christian Church, for instance, fought with the greatest bitterness Galileo and Isaac Newton and Darwin and Herbert Spencer. Surely we have nothing to learn of spiritual grace from the mediæval horrors of the Inquisition. Further back, in the early years of the Christian Church, we have little to learn from those who so misunderstood and distorted the teachings of Christ.

What serious appeal to modern intelligence can the history of other religions make? The picturesque mythology of Greece and Rome or Scandinavia, the bizarre hierarchy and archaic rites of Egypt or Babylon or India or China? These theologies are, of course, interesting histori-

cally, but the sacrificial altars of the Hebrews—our parent religion—or the suttees, the burning of widows, and the idolatry of India, or the pomp and panoply of Isis and Osiris, or the cold philosophy of Confucius, cannot give any inspiration to an enlightened conception of God.

A primitive people will gradually accumulate traditions which, handed down by word of mouth and attended by certain rude ceremonies, gradually become classified and systematized by the priestcraft until a more or less definite system of belief and worship will have been established. Intercourse, for trade reasons, with neighboring peoples will result in an infiltration of ideas. and the various religious systems will gradually develop in harmony with

the temperament and character of the people. Then, usually, there will appear a prophet, a man of bold, original, and appealing thought, who will lift up his voice in protest of existing religious conditions and try to recall the people to a purer, simpler faith than that which has become so complicated and burdened with priest-made customs. Some prophets have been mere upstarts, such as Mohammed, seeking self-power, and with no message or vision or any quality of seership. Others, however, such as Zoroaster, had certain high ideals, and others, like Confucius, have attained a high philosophy.

Mohammed certainly displayed no leaning toward spirituality or religion, no admirable qualities what-

ever, in fact, till, at middle age, he proclaimed his gift of prophecy. He had married a woman with money and he was mercenary enough to see the business advantages of attracting caravans to Mecca. He had absolutely no new message to give his followers, his teaching being merely a reassembling of earlier Hebraic and Arabian doctrines. But, having established a religious system of his own, it became, as universally is the case, a sin to introduce any change in it.

The Hebrew Moses was a prophet evidently of far more rugged and masterful character. He claimed a personal acquaintance with the one true God and presented to his followers a brief but comprehensive tabulation of doctrines which could

not be disputed or subjected to question because actually written, he told his awed followers, by Jehovah himself.

Of far greater spirituality, sincerity, and divine fire than most of the other prophets was Siddartha Gautama, the Buddha of royal lineage and brought up as a reigning prince in India. At earliest manhood he relinquished the pleasures and comforts of life, left his young wife and infant son, and, impelled with an irresistible longing for truth, lived a hermit life of meditation and prayer, experimenting with asceticism and going from one extreme to another till he gained normality and balance and returned to his fellows to teach them a purer morality, a higher ideal of life, and a consistent

and appropriate system of religious belief. Here was a man with no thought of self, with a true love for his fellows and an inspiring longing to find the true God, who had the courage to break away from the restraint of a debased priestcraft and try to bring peace and love to souls distressed and restless under false teachings. Yet, like all great, pure, outreaching souls, he was tragically misunderstood, and, as time went on, the religious system built up in his name became grotesquely at variance with his nature and teachings. His followers, claiming miraculous powers—which Buddha himself never dreamed of claiming—put a ban upon anyone else attempting what he devoted his life to—a personal quest after truth.

Probably the most misunderstood man of all the ages was Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. This purest, clearest, most original thinker of all the world, and with the sublime courage of his ideas, cleared utterly away the shackles of an outworn orthodoxy, with its eternal "thou shalt not," its deadening negativism, and its degrading materialism. He gave in its place the simplest creed conceivable, opposing, with superb positives, the negatives of the older religion, a creed intolerant of materialism, and with a call so pure and true to the life of the spirit that, in spite of the ignorant, stupid, misunderstanding teachings of those who profess to be his followers, it has survived to this day. The most daring and lofty of the world's thinkers is condemned

by posterity to give his name to a religion which through the centuries has constantly struggled to crush any further pursuit of the trail he blazed. His teachings, persistently misunderstood, and recorded by ignorant though devoted followers, have culminated in a religious system grotesquely at variance with their spirit. A ban has been placed upon any development of his ideas with the threat of excommunication, and the seed he sowed, instead of developing into an abundant harvest, has a withered yield, stunted with dry rot.

Such is the fate of all the great prophets, and as a consequence the vision of the great world of spiritual truths that lies beyond the mountain walls of conservatism which sur-

round us has been, through the ages, shut away from us.

Let any thoughtful person ask himself these questions: In my beliefs, have I not been like the peasant in the isolated valley who never dared to imagine a greater world outside his own little valley? Have not these beliefs been graven upon my consciousness in its most plastic and impressionable period of infancy and adolescence? Have I not been too prone to accept them unquestioningly and to accept them because of the overwhelming influence of my teachers and associates? Have I not a right to think things out for myself and start *de novo?* These questions I have asked of myself and I have determined that I am a free soul before God, with a right to

repudiate any professional intermedium or agent claiming to stand between him and me, with a right to open my heart and consciousness to him direct and to uncover my sounding board from its wrappings of man-made theology, so that it should be free to respond truly to the uninterrupted influence of the spirit. I am the heir of all the ages, but not the slave of them.

Theology has always turned back the hands of time. It has always harked back to the past, to periods of uncultured and primitive minds. Science looks ever forward. Enlightenment and progress lie in that direction, not backward toward the beginnings of experience. We must look, I have come to believe, to the

present and not to the past for a rational idea of God.

In trying to form some satisfactory conception of God, let us first inquire, "What do we really know about him?" not what we think we know about him from the teachings of others. What we think we know about him is that he is a venerable gentleman with flowing hair and beard and in voluminous garments, sitting in state in some far heaven, attended by a court of worshiping saints, directing the affairs of heaven and earth and accepting new members into his realm or condemning them to go elsewhere, according to their deserts. That is what we think we know of him if we accept the teachings of the Christian form of the Hebrew religion. If we are Mo-

hammedans we think of him as a sort of glorified sultan in a vast court of delightful polygamy. If we are Hindus we think we know him as a vague, dreamy-eyed being removed from all activity, whose powers are largely delegated to associates of a lesser rank. But always, in all religions, we think we know him as an intensely anthropomorphic superman presiding, in some definite limbo, over mortal affairs in all their details, craving flattering worship and open to suggestions as to how to run his world.

But what do we really know about him? What, in our experience, gives us any definite knowledge of him or any impression of his qualities? We have the material world lying all about us, inviting our study, but

God is invisible. Is our only line of approach to him through the material world or, if he is immaterial, are we cut off from a definite conception of him? Or can we get it by studying certain invisible elements which seem to have authority over the material world—elements we call spiritual laws? Theology claims that the alleged natural laws are controlled by God. Yet a study of the laws which seem to operate in the material world has been made by man for ages and all he has found by such study is a God—so far as I can see—hopelessly contradictory in character—an all-powerful and infinitely good one who allows waste and horrible evil to exist. Is not the conclusion inevitable that either God does not control these laws and has

no influence over matter or else that he is not infinitely good, since the operation of those laws produces evil? The only other tenable hypothesis is that God has very considerable limits both as to his power and his goodness. Plato and Aristotle, two of the profoundest thinkers of the human race, struggled with this thought. Plato, the sensitive and gentle idealist, unable to believe that a pure and holy deity could be responsible for the horrors of nature, decided that his goodness was made somewhat ineffective by the intractableness of nature, which he tried in vain to control, and the Gnostics strove to express the idea that God was trying to redeem a world created by the devil. Augustine, from this, worked out his idea of

"total depravity" and the "philosophy of the plan of salvation." They nevertheless clung to the idea of the omnipotence of Deity by paying him the doubtful compliment, as John Stuart Mill says, of making him the creator of the devil.

It thus becomes clear, it seems to me, that either God does not have control over matter or, if he does, he is not infinitely good. If investigation shall satisfy us that God does not control matter, the way will be open to the problem as to whether or not he is infinitely good. This can be approached by a study of spiritual laws or spiritual forces or spiritual influences which are discernible everywhere in the world. We think, at least, they are discernible. If they are not, if we find no approach to

God through a study of matter and decide that there are no spiritual influences to study, then we can conclude that there is no God—at least none that can be imagined by the human mind.

CHAPTER IV

THE problem has now resolved itself into the following hypotheses:

1. God created and operates the material world, and, since evil exists in it, he is not infinitely good.

2. God is infinitely good, therefore he did not create and does not operate the material world.

3. Although God did not create and does not operate the material world, he is not necessarily infinitely good.

Let us study each of these three hypotheses in turn. In studying the first, let us examine, for a moment, the world of matter and see if we can find, in its operations, any clear evidence of the influence of something divine, something spiritual upon it.

We know, of course, that matter exists. Theology tells us that it was "created," but the verb "to create," we have decided, has no accurate meaning. Physics teaches us that matter is indestructible, therefore it can never cease to exist. Physics also teaches us that matter is everywhere quivering with energy, which has no beginning and no end. In other words, matter has always existed in one form or another. The mystery of the beginning and end of matter is all wrapped up and entangled with the mystery of time. Measurement by time seems to me to be an invention of the human mind to account for the sequence of things. By this perhaps arbitrary method—as arbitrary as the methods of arithmetic and of algebra—which

are merely jugglements with symbols—we find a convenient way of measuring the growth and decay of a tree or a plant or of accounting for the element of change in things. And, after all, isn't that really the only way that time affects matter? Is it not merely a convenient way of regarding the change in things material? By using the time rule we can express the fact that particles come together to form gases and solids, that the seed becomes the tree and the tree decays and becomes part of the soil and air again; that the child grows to maturity and man ultimately achieves death and his body is once more resolved into its component parts; that, through the æons, stars and planetary systems have taken shape; that monads and

races of people come into existence and ultimately disappear; that our planet will die, as the moon has died, and perhaps swoon away into the ether—whatever that is. But time itself? Is it really anything but a term of measurement, a convenient way of recording change in matter, a symbol, and does it really have any existence in the world of matter?

If we accept this theory of time, then the problem of the beginning and end of matter disappears. Likewise the verb "to create" ceases to have any meaning or value since there is no such actual thing as creation.

It is unnecessary to speculate, therefore, upon the beginning or end of matter. And, after all, it is of no importance in the question as to

whether or not matter is guided or influenced by spirit. So far as we can know, matter undoubtedly exists.

Now let us consider the operations of nature. Let us see if we can find out if these operations are guided by good or by evil spiritual influences, or not guided at all by any spiritual influence.

Nature's first law is undoubtedly the law of self-preservation. Darwin expresses it as the "survival of the fittest." This law works universally and automatically. It is utterly regardless of its effects upon others. No element of altruism or unselfishness enters into it. It is the antithesis to the first law of spirit, which is the essence of unselfishness, as we shall see when we study the world of spirit. A thousand instances spring

to mind to illustrate the fact that no element of unselfishness has any influence upon the workings of the laws of nature—that nature is not only antagonistic to the laws of spirit, but actually unaware of them. A storm at sea will overwhelm the ship of a hardy band of pioneers, gallantly faring forth to find new lands for the overcrowded citizens of their fatherland, or a vessel bearing food supplies to a famine-stricken country, with the same unconcern with which it would toss about floating carrion. A combination of gases inadvertently brought together through some slight error on the part of a great scientist who is eagerly seeking a substance to help suffering humanity will explode and extinguish that incalculably valuable life

because they follow the laws of nature only. A blizzard, developed by natural atmospheric conditions, will rage with an equal fury in a deserted prairie and in a community of defenseless humans. Indeed, it is easily imaginable that some unusual atmospheric change might so affect the climate of our earth that all human and brute life might be frozen or burned out of existence. Fire, once kindled and wind-driven, will consume everything in its path which is inflammable, whether that matter be dry underbrush or crowded tenement dwellings. There is no evidence that it is even aware of any quality in that which it consumes save the quality of inflammability.

The germ of a deadly disease will, for its own nourishment and the

propagation of its species, fasten and thrive upon a great philanthropist with the same unconcern with which it would attach itself to a swamp fungus. The bird seizes and destroys the worm to feed itself for the same reason that the fox devours the bird, the wolf the fox, the leopard the wolf, and the volcano destroys the entire forest when it relieves itself of its internal fires.

One can multiply these instances indefinitely. Matter exists for matter only, unaware of anything outside of its own mechanical processes. It is merely the slave of inertia. Matter cannot, therefore, be either praised or blamed for its acts. The consequence of its acts may produce good or evil, or neither, but the acts themselves have no attri-

butes either of good or of evil. A rock loosened from the mountain side may crush out the useful life of a husband and father and deprive a deserving family of his support, or it may kill a man who is about to commit a murder, or it may bury itself harmlessly in the mud. A crop of corn may be useful when it furnishes sustenance to a community and its cattle, but we do not consider that an act of goodness on the part of the corn. Neither do we blame the storm when it wrecks the ship. But if the actions of the corn and the storm were controlled by a spiritual law, put into operation by a sentient Deity who was aware of the good or evil effects of his laws, then we could praise or blame him. In other words, nothing that we can learn of matter

gives us any reason to consider that the acts of matter are either good or evil. But everywhere, in the results of these acts, do we find not only good, but evil, innumerable scenes of cruelty surpassing any that man can devise, the strong overcoming the weak, and constant, remorseless waste. If the so-called laws of nature are under the control of some spiritual power, then that power has horrible capacities for evil in it. So if we find, on examining Hypothesis 2, the realm of spirit, that all evidences of that spirit show it to be good, then spirit has no relationship with or influence over matter. For, if spirit, or God, is infinitely good, then matter must be wholly uncontrolled by God if the results of its acts show anywhere the strain

of evil, because all acts which are controlled by what is infinitely good must be infinitely good, as must be also the results of those acts.

How can one study matter without seeing everywhere the colossal waste and ruthlessness in all its acts and the consequent suffering of sentient creatures? The mineralogist tells us of the gradual formation of the crystal, that perfect expression of angular and prismatic beauty, but he has to admit that perfect crystals are few because of the habit of extraneous ingredients creeping in and distorting their growth. The evolutionist tells us of the rise of animal life from lower to higher form, but the so-called law of the survival of the fittest causes the incessant destruction of the weaker. We speak

glibly of nature's wonderful laws working harmoniously amid the music of the spheres, but everywhere we see violence and waste, fearful cataclysm and endless destruction.

How can we say that matter is striving always for perfection and is therefore guided by spirit when we have so circumscribed a vision of nature? Our study of it is limited to a glimpse extending over but a few thousand years, and what is that brief span when compared to eternity? Suppose a monad is born in a drop of moisture on a piece of brick on a wall at the moment the wall is being blown to destruction. There is an explosion, the masonry flies into the air, chaos ensues as the debris falls. We would hardly claim that there were any order there.

Yet the monad is born, grows to maturity, rounds out his allotted span of life, and, before he dies, an instant after his birth, we can imagine him saying, in the ripe wisdom of his life experience, that he finds the world orderly and peaceful and that life has shown him a wonderful purpose and design and a governing intelligence. The falling wall, while it is disintegrating with violence, is, to the monad, a condition of great orderliness. The difference between his outlook on life and ours is only a matter of degree. Our idea of life is, in comparison with eternity, of infinitesimal brevity and constriction, like that of the monad to us. How, then, can we dare to claim that we see anything of law or order or intelligence in the acts of matter?

Our view of the growth of planets and their decay, of the processes of evolution, might seem equally of infinitesimal transientness to the conciousness of him who is eternal.

Herbert Spencer announced that the law of universal evolution is caused by the persistence of force. But even evolution seems to lose somewhat of its significance when we think of the limited viewpoint of our wisest philosophers and of our friend the monad! That there is change in matter is unquestionable. A persistent stream of force or power, a continuous and everywhere-present motive, is clearly demonstrated by science. Motion exists in the atoms of the sternest rock, the molecules of all living organisms, and the circling of the planets. What we are

pleased to call "natural laws" are not compelling forces which prescribe and cause the movements of matter, but are merely our way of describing the movements. These "natural laws" are not laws, but descriptions. They are subjective and not objective.

We speak of evolution as indicating a divine intelligence in the control of matter. While, from our extremely limited viewpoint, matter seems to show a tendency to develop from primal to more coherent form, from a less to a better organized state, from disassociated amœba to organisms which function with life, from liquids and gases to solids; while progress is indubitably discernible in the history of our planet, for instance, is not this tendency

quite ephemeral and followed by a corresponding decay? Will there not be a corresponding devolution as the planet eventually cools off, the life upon it dying and its fruitfulness declining toward its inevitable death? The moon and other planets have done this, and there is no reason to suppose that all the members of our solar and planetary system should not have periods of infancy, maturity, and decline corresponding to those of man, brute, and members of the vegetable kingdom. Evolution, it seems to me, is merely a statement of this growth, a period in the history of this particular planet on which we now are, and takes no account of the period of devolution to follow. So, from this larger viewpoint, I cannot see

how evolution can argue for the presence of any ultimate high purpose in the material world. Growth, decay, change without meaning, so far as we can see; violent cataclysms of every description, worlds bursting in space, a flux and flow of energy and colossal, universal waste hardly are convincing of any aspiration toward perfection or a plan in the mind of some supreme being who is inspired by an infinite tenderness, wisdom and love.

Countless illustrations of this waste in our own world come to mind. The exquisite violet is crushed by the foot of the beast, the tiger rends and destroys the doe, the avalanche destroys the fertile valley. No man of business could run his factory or office along such uneconomic lines!

No industry could survive if it were conducted with so much lost motion! Imagine a human producer allowing such constant waste and destruction of his products! Only yesterday we were in the agonies of the Great War, where the forces of destruction annihilated millions of the most highly organized creatures known to us. The natural causes which so laboriously brought them into being now turn and wantonly destroy them!

Thinking along these lines, I cannot escape the conclusion that matter in all its acts, and the effects of its acts, is not only completely separated from and unaffected by any influence outside of itself, but is absolutely unaware of any such influence. I can find in it no evidence whatever

of the influence of divine order or growth or intelligent design, no trace of the qualities of justice or mercy or charity or love. Matter has no consciousness outside of itself.

One might ask, if there is no spiritual character to matter, how can we account for the presence of æsthetic beauty in the world—the color and perfume of the flowers, the grace in animals? Nature, it is true, gives us many things which appear beautiful to us, but it also gives us many forms which appear ugly. Amid the flowers hover the disease-bearing mosquitoes; the grace of the doe and the panther is matched by the repulsiveness of the rhinoceros and the wart hog. The poet acclaims the beauties of God's world, the delightful prospect of the breeze-stirred

grain field, the lights and shadows of the woods, and the gentle curve of the hills against the sunset sky. But it is not in these things themselves that beauty lies; it is in our hearts, in our spiritual consciousness of qualities with which we endue nature. The cow looks upon the breeze-swept grain field and there is no beauty there to her. All she sees is food. A lumberman may look upon a forest and only see there so many million feet of timber for his mills. Emerson says, though you travel the world over to find the beautiful, unless you take it with you you will find it not. Beauty is spiritual, not material.

A study of Hypothesis 1 convinces me, therefore, that spiritual laws, if there are any, have no control over or relationship with matter and,

using the term God as being the personification of spirit, he did not create and does not operate the material world. If our study of Hypothesis 2 enables us to find a God who is infinitely good, surely the operations of the movements of matter, resulting in so much evil, must be utterly repugnant to him.

And since God did not create the material world, the corollary that he is not infinitely good disappears. The first hypothesis, then, as I understand it, stands condemned.

CHAPTER V

HAVING found no evidence of the presence of anything spiritual in the world of matter, no trace of divine influence which it is aware of or obeys—in fact, no reason whatever for the age-long claim that God created or controls it—let us study Hypothesis 2: "God is infinitely good, therefore he did not create the world." Let us see if there is any evidence of anything apart from matter and the force which controls matter and which *is* matter—for science now regards force and matter, I believe, as the same thing.[1]

[1] According to Einstein, M multiplied by C squared (where C is the velocity of light) is equal to E; M representing the mass and E the energy. This formula shows not only a very simple relationship between the mass and the energy of a particle, but actually points to the fact that mass and energy belong to one and the same fundamental entity.

Let us see if we can find any effects operating in life which are the results of some influence to which matter is not amenable. And if we find those effects, let us study them and see if from them we can deduce the character of the influences which have caused them. If those influences seem to be uniformly and generically different from those which control matter; if, instead of having the essential characteristic of selfishness, they have the converse quality, unselfishness—if they are altruistic and not egoistic, influences not discernible in the actions of matter, then we can consider these influences, since they all have the one fundamental quality, as emanations from something outside of matter, proceeding from one great superin-

fluence. And by their quality we can form an idea of the quality of the fountainhead from which they issue.

Since in inanimate matter we cannot find influences of this sort, we must look for them elsewhere, and we turn to the actions of man, hoping to find the element because, as we study man's history, we find unmistakable evidences of a course of action which is foreign to the action of things inanimate. He performs acts contrary to his biological promptings; he functions in a way essentially different from anything else in matter. A study of this course of actions shows a positive phenomenon in life, a phenomenon growing clearer and stronger as man develops and rises in his civilization. It is as though some great propulsive

force were compelling him to rise away from and above matter, a vital energy inspiring him to escape the bonds of his biological habit, his physical and mental handicaps. This force sometimes works obscurely in masses of men over long periods of time, sometimes it scintillates with sudden and startling brilliance in some inspired individual. A group of men, out of chivalry, will cry, "Women and children first" and yield their places in the lifeboats, and go down to death in the sinking ship because, answering to this force, they gallantly repudiate the first law of nature. Volunteers for extra-hazardous service may always be found for some attempted deed of heroism. We cannot look back over human history without noting a more

or less consistent growth of a realization in man that merely to exist under the thrall of the forces which control matter cannot satisfy him. He realizes more and more, as he develops, that there is a life higher and more worthy than that of the brute. If through all the ages there had been no response to this force, mankind would still be living in the stone age.

No leader in all the long struggle of humanity but has evidenced the effect of this phenomenal force. No great religious teacher, philosopher, or patriot, no one who has fought for civil and religious liberty, enlightenment and truth but has been responsive to this force. Jesus, Gautama, Paul, Savonarola, Luther, Socrates, Epictetus, Kant, John Huss,

Cromwell, Washington, Garibaldi, Lincoln and "a sweet host more" are examples that instantly come to mind. But it is not alone in the conspicuous figures in history that this leaven works. The progress of the human race is a multiplication of myriad acts of moral courage, self-sacrifice, and heroism on the part of the humble and obscure. Whatever the fame or obscurity, the same quality distinguishes these acts. We give its many forms such names as mercy, justice, charity, goodness, and love.

What more tremendous and absolutely convincing proof that mankind has heard and is answering this influence can there be than in the fact that millions of men have willingly, gladly left the peace and

security of their homes and exposed themselves to every form of danger, and have sacrificed their lives in the Great War—free men, under a government of their own choosing, not slaves of war lords compelling them to fight—because the idea of brute force to become predominant in the world was utterly intolerable to them. From the material point of view they did not have to fight. Life under any form of conquest and oppression would be dearer to them than no life at all. Political conditions, had the enemy been allowed to have his will, would, perhaps, not have been pleasant, but it would have at least meant physical safety and the enjoyment of life. But our heroes were content to leave the safety and comfort of their homes,

their loved ones, their business careers, and make the greatest of all sacrifices because of the compelling call of this immaterial force.

A study of the development of human life cannot but show a growing reaction from subserviency to the force which controls matter and a greater and greater response to the converse force. Philosophers describe man's development in this direction by saying that there are three stages in his development—the egoistic, the ego-altruistic, and the altruistic. Primitive and immature man is solely concerned as to himself. The infant receives his food without any thought of gratitude or feeling of obligation to help anyone else to obtain food. He cries for what he desires and snatches the plaything

from his playmate, just as the cave man lived by right of seizure. As he grows older, the infant begins to consider others, but with an eye to his own welfare. He will offer to share his toys and have some little consideration for the feelings of others, just as the more civilized man, who has attained a corresponding ego-altruistic stage, will impart to others his skill in weapon making, welcome his neighbor to the fire, and help a fellow warrior in distress. The highly developed man, the altruist, will think more of others than of himself. He will work for them and counsel them and realize that his chief happiness lies in the progress and safety and happiness of his fellows. The material law of self-preservation be-

comes subservient to the influence of this other force. As man's nature becomes less material, the matter force yields to the sway of this immaterial force which is so essentially antagonistic and antithetical to matter-egoism. Man responds consciously and more and more willingly to the force of ideal altruism which can be denominated by the word "spirit."

The spiritual influence is thus clearly demonstrated. Yielding to it, man, wending his long and painful way toward altruism, develops qualities of mercy and benevolence and love. By those manifestations of its influence we deduce their quality. The fragrance tells of the essence, the shadow outlines the substance. And since those manifestations all

have the same fundamental qualities of justice, mercy, charity, and love, we realize that they are not only uniformly and generically different from those which control matter, but absolutely antithetical to them. Also the conclusion is unescapable that they emanate from one great super-influence whose quality is thus definitely determined. It is the eternal essence of altruism, of love—a love which is infinite, with no trace or strain of anything but love in it. Nothing but infinite goodness and love can affect it or emanate from it. And to this fountainhead of infinite goodness and love we give the term God.

With the appearance in life of sentient and thinking man comes the appearance in life of the influence of

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God and the growing strength of God's influence is synchronous with man's repudiation of matter influence. Man thus comes to assume a position in life between the two worlds of matter and spirit. He is a part of each world and partly controlled by each. Physically and mentally he is the result of the same evolutionary processes that have produced numberless other forms of vegetable and animal life. He is born, breathes, eats, develops, lives, and dies similarly to other matter organisms. To live and develop he must keep himself from freezing and starving, from attack by beast and by his fellows, from fire and flood. But spiritually he possesses a quality which inanimate matter lacks, the quality of response to the influence

of spirit, of God. Thus man is shown to occupy a unique place in life. This quality which we call "soul" is the only thing in life where any response to God's influence and power can be isolated. Thus, the only way in which God can have any influence over matter is by seeking response and action in the soul of man. Man can cut down a forest and build a city influenced by the spirit of God, but God cannot preserve that city from destruction by such natural violences as fire or flood or the eruption of a volcano.

The question naturally arises, "Although God did not create and does not operate the material world, is he necessarily good?" How do we account for the evidences of evil influences visible in the actions of

man? Man is a prey to evil passions —to selfishness, to hatred and jealousy and anger, resulting in acts of injustice and cruelty and evil of every description. Does not this argue that God either is not infinitely good—that his influences are sometimes evil—or that he is not all-powerful even in the spiritual world?

Matter, in its actions, is not evil. It is unaware of evil or of good; it is neutral or merely unmoral. But man is aware of his acts and the results of his acts. He has consciousness, which matter has not. He is sentient. Man, as has been said, is part matter and part spirit, and the eternal conflict of the two worlds is waged in him. Evil in matter is neutral. In man it is positive because he is aware of it. In so far as he yields to

the impulses of the biological side of his nature, his acts may be good or evil. They may be good, not because he is yielding to spirit—for many of the acts of matter result in good—but merely because he is functioning along natural, material lines, which happen to have that quality.

If, for instance, we could conceive of a man who had no quality of spirit in him whatever, no soul, he could still perform good acts. Man's acts may also be evil, just as the results of many of the actions of matter produce evil. But when he consciously does a good act, knowing that in order to do that good act he must resist the temptation to yield to the more biologically natural law of egoism or selfishness—when he risks

his life to save the life of another—then he demonstrates undoubtedly that he is answering to the higher law of spirit.

But every evil act which he consciously does can, just as certainly, be traced to the yielding of man to the sway of matter, which is essentially egoistic and selfish.

Since, then, every evil act of man has, as its fundamental characteristic, selfishness in one form or another, which is the fundamental characteristic of matter, is it not clearly shown that these acts are performed because man, *having the choice of yielding to the call of spirit or the call of matter, consciously chooses matter?* No conscious act of goodness which defies the selfish law of matter can be caused otherwise than by

yielding to the call of the spirit. Likewise, no conscious act of evil which defies the unselfish law of spirit can be caused otherwise than by yielding to the call of matter.

Expressing it in another way, man's evil acts can always be clearly shown to be part of the evolutionary processes of matter, and he yields to them because his consciousness of the influence of spirit is not strong enough to prevail over the baser influence of his material being. When, however, his response to the urge of the spirit is strong enough to prevail over the urge of his material being, the purely physiological element in him, then and then only does he consciously perform a good, an unselfish act.

Reasoning thus, I can find no

argument that spirit, or God, is not all-powerful in the spiritual world. I find that he is absolutely without power or authority over the material world except in so far as he can reach it through the soul of man;

—That man is partly controlled by matter and partly by spirit, and that he is the only thing in life which we have found to occupy this unique position;

—That God is striving, through man, to influence matter so as to ameliorate man's slavery to it and help him in his eternal struggle against its domination.

Hypothesis 2, then, is, to my mind, established as the true theory, and it also disproves Hypothesis 1, which has already condemned itself. And the establishment of Hy-

pothesis 2 sweeps away Hypothesis 3, which is, "Although God did not create the world and does not operate the material world, he is not necessarily good." This hypothesis, then, need not further be considered.

CHAPTER VI

BY the line of reasoning described in the study of the three hypotheses, I have reached the conclusion that there are two distinct and separate worlds, the world of matter—the outward, visible world, made apparent to us through our consciousness (though probably only partially revealed to us, since our consciousness has decided limitations) —and the world of spirit, which is invisible and only discovered by the process of ratiocination—the process of reasoning back from effects to causes. I believe that the problem as to how matter began or is to end has no bearing upon a reasonable and clear conception of God. It is an

enticing field of speculation, but it is immaterial to the subject. I must conclude that God is powerless to affect or influence the world of matter except in indirectly reaching it through the soul of man, and I must conclude that the age-long concept of God as an all-powerful creator, which originated in primitive minds and which has been mistakenly held sacrosanct through the ages, is an erroneous one.

Here I take a clear-cut issue with established beliefs. I find a world of matter which is, of itself, unmoral, having neither good nor evil as characteristics, but which in its workings impartially produces both, and a world of spirit which is wholly good. I find man to be a unique phenomenon in nature, placed upon

the dividing line between the two worlds, biologically bound to matter and spiritually responsive to the direct influence of God. He constantly strives to throw off the incubus of the former and free himself to respond to the call of the latter—to rise above the impersonal processes of the one and to fight for its and his own betterment. In this effort and high resolve he has the constant inspiration and help of the divine force.

This belief seems to me to be incompatible with any form of fatalism, and such antiquated doctrines as predestination become grotesque. Fatalism, in fact, seems to be the direct result of a belief that matter is controlled by spirit. If we believe that matter is controlled by spirit, it

is hopeless and impious to oppose or combat or try to change its workings. We must bow impotently and meekly to it if we believe that the spiritual control is all-wise and all-powerful. If, for instance, we believe that God rules the material world and operates the so-called laws of nature, how illogical, in fact how impertinent and blasphemous, it is to pray him to make exceptions to his rulings or to suspend, for our imagined benefit, their workings! With this belief, how can we dare to form the prayers the formulas of which are constantly phrased to us from countless pulpits? With this belief, we must be either fatalists or illogical. In fact, all advances of medicine or surgery and social betterment, all advances of science and for material betterment,

all attempts to seek material improvement, are "flying in the face of Providence" because one must not alter or attempt to improve "what God has ordained." Fatalism is one of the great curses of the world. Its deadly chill has congealed the advance of the effete nations. China has had its progress arrested for centuries; India, Turkey have suffered from its blight; and the Western World has made its material progress in spite of it and only as it has partially thrown off its influence. It would have advanced immeasurably farther had it been free from it.

The Roger Bacon cryptogram is a striking case in point. Here was a monk, living in the Dark Ages, who had a vision of future discoveries of science, and, knowing that the

Church would torture him to death if he published his ideas, he consigned them to cryptographic writing and concealed them so well that only recently have they been brought to light. Had he dared to give the world the benefit of his ideas, discoveries only recently made would have been of beneficent use to humanity centuries ago. The progress of the world was retarded because of this form of fatalism. It was the theory so tenaciously clung to by conventional religion, that God created the world and material forces must not be tampered with, which for so long robbed human life of the benefit of the forward-looking ideas of this monk.

Fatalism has, since primitive times, cast a blight upon the world that has

seriously retarded progress. The superstition that all things are foreordained, that everything which occurs is the result of divine direction, that the course of events cannot by any possibility be altered by anything that man can do, has rested like an evil spell upon many peoples and races. Oriental countries, with their teeming millions, have lain for generations in the lethargy of this opiate. The Moslem belief that all animal life is the creation of God and therefore must be held inviolate has made its followers a prey to beast, insect, and microbe. What can be a more horrible example of this than the sight of an Egyptian fellaheen woman holding her babe in her arms, with a great dark patch over each eye, a mass of filthy flies eating out the

eyeballs and dooming it to blindness, unhindered by the mother, who has been taught not to interfere with the needs of the flies!

Religious fatalism has given certain Oriental countries the evils of overpopulation, famine, and disease; it has enchained China and Russia, converting their teeming hordes into mere masses of inertia under the conviction that they should do nothing to change what they believed to be the will of God. Stoic philosophy is founded on the same error, and early Christianity, up to and subsequent to Calvinism, clung to the pernicious doctrine of predestination. Lack of progress is the inevitable result. Races or individuals who cling to this belief are crippled in their efficiency.

If, on the contrary, men could consider themselves free agents, having the power to combat and conquer the forces of nature and to determine in a measure their own destinies, the whole situation alters. With initiative and only through initiative we rise in civilization. Inert and ignorant peoples become progressive and superstition gives place to enlightenment.

Humanity stands at the battle-front of an immense and endless war against the raw forces of nature handicapped by the clogging impedimenta of superstition. Only by intelligence, a clear understanding of the realities of spirit, a true response to its influence, with souls responding truly to the divine inspiration, can we expect to wage the war with

success. Our orders are clearly communicated to us from the unseen Central Command and we must learn to receive, understand, and follow them. At times we seize a little territory from the enemy; at times we rest and recoup our forces for a new attack; at times we give way. Here and there leaders appear, leaders specially endowed with insight and vision and courage, who marshal and cheer their comrades and little by little, albeit slowly, the front is thrown further forward. The end and the object of it all we do not know, but the front surely moves forward, for, dimly or clearly, we all are actuated by the great impulse, faint at times, but unmistakable—the call and the inspiration of the spirit. Much of the time we do

not listen to it, much of the time we do not obey it, but it is always insistently there and for everyone there is an objective to be gained, an objective upon which the whole front and the sheltered ones behind the front depend.

CHAPTER VII

MAN, as a merely physical organism, primitive man, follows, automatically and unconsciously, the processes of nature, with self-preservation the first law. He has watched the beasts of prey mangling their victims, he has seen the raw forces of nature working together, often in disharmony and often crushing out the lives of sentient beings in a way that appears to him to be merciless. He himself is the result of the process of violent elimination, in which the weaker organisms yield to the stronger. The survival of the fittest is nothing more than the survival of the most ruthless. So primitive man, following

naturally nature's methods, insures his own existence by depriving his fellow of his property—his ax, his cave, his woman. As tribes formed, the stronger and more ferocious ones destroyed and enslaved the weaker. And, with slowly dawning civilization, when intelligence partly supplanted muscle, we find the clever depriving the simple minded of the fruits of his toil, the strong brained destroying or enslaving the weak brained, the nation equipped with superior science employing that superiority to exploit more ignorant peoples.

Natural man, in other words, is actuated by the same impulses which actuate the material world about him.

Coexistent, however, with the development of man from primitive to

civilized state, we find, as already pointed out, a new and strange phenomenon working with ever greater force. Individuals or groups of individuals conduct themselves in a manner quite different from that of their physical heritage. A strong man breaks the first law of nature and gives aid to the weak. He works contrary to his physical instinct and in response to a new and higher influence. Human history becomes filled with the records of acts of mercy and of sacrifice which are antithetical to his physical environment. This influence we call spirit. Nowhere, except in humanity, do we find any such influence in operation. It belongs to an alien sphere.

Under this influence man becomes critical of the operations of the

material world and measures its operations by a different standard. What had seemed natural now becomes abhorrent. This influence could never have come from a mere experience with material things. No amount of materialism could produce spiritualism. Selfishness, cruelty, lust cannot produce charity, kindness, and sweetness.

Man, acting in accordance with this spiritual influence, runs counter to brute and inanimate nature. Tracing back his actions to darkest antiquity, we find his annals sparkling more and more with this divine light. In savage tribes, in cultured communities, in hovels and in palaces, we see constantly growing evidences of this spiritual contact. It is a supernatural force totally dissimilar

to everything in the material world. It causes man to challenge and defy the authority of physical force. It reaches every man in varying degrees of intensity, according to his responsiveness. It needs no revelation through any ecclesiastical intermediary, though individuals and institutions have, at times, aided man to perceive and accept it. Christ was its supreme interpreter and teacher, and it is a tragic misfortune that his teachings were not more accurately transcribed, his life more accurately narrated.

By the influence of spirit working in man, the hardships of the material world are ameliorated, natural man's inhumanity to man is softened, and old oppressions, old tyrannies are overthrown.

CHAPTER VIII

WITH this theory of God's place and God's limitations established, how does it affect my concept of him? Is he a lesser God? Has he been shorn of any of his powers in his relation to me? Has he become less personal, less intimate, less a source of help, less inspiring? In thinking of God in this new light, I find that, instead of befogging him and hiding him in mystery, I have unveiled him and found in him something extraordinarily inspiring and comforting and always near to me. A new courage, a new happiness, a new peace of mind have come to replace the unrest and questionings and un-

happiness of the years while I fought my long battle with what were to me the inconsistencies and futilities and contradictions of church-made religious doctrines.

In the first place, there are no more shocks to my faith as unearned trouble, catastrophes due to natural causes, and horrible examples of what seemed colossal injustice on the part of nature occur. I no longer ask why God allowed grief to come to me in the form of death to a relative or friend, because I now feel that he had nothing to do with that death. I do not blame him or hold him accountable for the endless succession of physical violences of all kinds, *because he did not cause them.* The phrases of the professional religious comforter that "it is all for the

best"—when in our hearts we know it is not for the best (as when an only child is killed or a devoted mother is wrested from her children by death), "that God's will must be done," become meaningless and positively blasphemous. Of all empty and smug assurances, the one that only through the ordeal of trial could we become disciplined and made strong always seemed to me to be the most irritating and false. We have all been assured countless times that without struggle we should become weak, that trials were sent us to temper us and develop our character; that if we had nothing to conquer we could not grow in grace; that we were all in the making and that God in his own good time would complete his age-long and painful

processes and we should become perfect beings—creations completed; that there would be no more sin nor pain. Why, why, I would ask, even if this were the law of life, should a merciful God have made such a law? Why should he have made such a thing as we call human nature and made it that kind of a thing? And why should he withhold for so long peace and happiness to his beloved children when he could give it to them now—could have given it to them at first? A clerical shrug of the shoulders was the only answer.

What would we think of a cruel brute who allowed his horse with a hopelessly broken leg, or his dog with a painful disease, to linger on in agony instead of mercifully putting him out of his misery? We would

look upon him with horror, and punish him if possible. Yet there are to-day millions of unhappy aged people, diseased and suffering innocent children and hopeless cripples, lingering on toward slow and torturing death, and mankind is prone to regard God, "the merciful creator of us all," as being willing to allow this state of things! Take the case of a stricken and feeble old man, for instance, who has taken life bravely as it came, faced its trials and problems, fulfilled his functions, and been rewarded for long years of devotion to family and civic duties by years of feebleness and physical suffering and mental decay—by slow degradation in the sight of his fellows until death finally relieves him. What a frightful misunderstanding of God's

all-loving grace to think for a moment that this is his will!

Certainly, if the theory of a God-created world had not been invented ages ago, when primitive minds could not think of a more reasonable theory and taught us persistently and blindly ever since, there would not be the slightest appeal to it now or any chance for it to be accepted by intelligent minds. It answers no purpose in life, it performs no function save in being an easy answer to things not easy to understand.

And how could we possibly deduce the conclusion that it was specially designed by an all-wise creator for man's use? Certainly, man's environment is not an ideal one for him. In a natural way, it is only by constant struggle, by a con-

stant overcoming of dangers, that he is able to continue his existence with any comfort. And in a spiritual way, there seems to be an utter lack of a system of training by which, in overcoming the hardships and dangers, he builds up his character. Or at least, if there is any system, it is an exceedingly faulty one, *for man is never sure of any reward for his efforts.* The most thrifty farmer will, at times, lose his crops by flood or drought or insect. The most careful and useful citizen will suffer accidental death, the most skillful mariner lose his ship, his cargo, his passengers, and his life by an erratic meteorological convulsion. The earth's surface is partly uninhabitable because of vast tracts of desert, ice, or swamp, and a large part of it is

only used with seemingly unnecessary difficulty where exist rocky farms, poisonous jungles, and semi-sterile plains. We have an awkward system of heating and lighting and watering, causing constant discomfort and inconvenience to everyone. The rain falls alike upon the just and the unjust, and nature wreaks havoc on man's best efforts unintelligently and with no regard to his vices and virtues, evidently not with any plan of rewards and punishments.

If these difficulties which beset man everywhere in the material world worked in a uniform method, man could study that method and learn by experience that certain definite labors would produce certain definite results; that a character-

training in him, an attitude toward his environment, would bring certain sure penalties or rewards. But violences, unforeseen and unescapable violences, are constantly happening. A thousand eccentricities on the part of nature, which cannot possibly be foretold, will occur to lay waste his best efforts and set at naught his best made plans. This does not seem to be an intelligent system for the training and development of man's character.

Evil in any form—poverty, ignorance, disease, war, crime, physical and mental suffering—are not God's will. No evil comes from him and he has no direct means of preventing evil that arises from the processes of the material world. On the contrary, he is arrayed on our

side in our contest with nature. Eternal sympathy and love flow from him to us in our trouble, and, acting under his inspiration, we can rise above material disaster. The eternal contradiction thus disappears. *God did not create the world and people it with his children, made in his own likeness, and then turn them over to the torture of the powers of evil.* There are no spiritual powers of evil working against the spiritual powers of good, and the age-long theory of diabolism, which confused Plato and Augustine and Luther and befogged all the religious systems of the world, disappears into the mists of superstition. God cannot control the movements of the planets, the change of seasons, the winds, the tides, the storms, nor the growths of

the fields, nor the birth, security, and death of brute or man. He cannot, consequently, answer the prayers for rain, nor for the safety of those who go down to the sea in ships, nor for the success or failure of contending armies. But he can inspire us with courage to bear catastrophies and understand why they happen.

He is not a god of anger, a mere Jehovah, demanding a worship of fulsome flattery, constant confession of sinfulness and pleadings for forgiveness, sitting up in some far heaven, listening to hints from humans as to how to run his world. He did not put into operation what we call natural laws and then allow us mortals to persuade him to make exceptions to those laws for our personal benefit. He cannot pro-

long the life of the dying child, nor temper the wind to the shorn lamb, nor give Joshua the power to make the sun to stand still on the plains of Ajalon. How preposterous becomes the custom of requiring "sinners" to abase themselves and—with a humility mixed with a secret desire to escape punishment—try to wheedle an irritated God into a lenient view of the case! How preposterous to think that the quintessence of altruism and love is a God who starts out to punish one of his children by visiting evil in one form or another upon him, and then changes his mind because of hymn singing and bead telling on the part of a penitent!

And, personally, I find it comforting to believe that none of us have

any strain of spiritual evil in us. Our souls are pure. They may be primitive souls, buried deep under the weight of our material inheritance, but the soul itself, whether it is allowed to respond but feebly or strongly to the spiritual influence, is a very part of God. All sins, all evil that a man does, can be clearly traced to his material side. Greed, avarice, cruelty, lust, anger, dishonesty are all caused by a yielding to the primitive urge of matter, the law of self-preservation and selfishness. It is consequently in the power of everyone, and it is the duty of everyone, to rise above the influence of the body and, by an act of will, cultivate his spiritual nature. The more we think of our spiritual element and cultivate it, the more

we rise above the baser phase of our dual nature.

In considering the origin of matter I have found that the mystery of its creation is not a stumbling block to an understanding of God. Whether or not it is eternal is of no consequence. Matter *is* and, so far as we are concerned, it always has been and always will be. I feel the same way in regard to spirit. So far as we are concerned and can know, it is eternal. Matter demonstrated itself to man at the birth of man's consciousness and has revealed its characteristics and potentialties more and more as man has grown in intelligence. But when did spirit discover itself to man?

If a church organist is practicing at his instrument, and if he is alone

in the church, the beautiful harmonies he produces fill the building, but, save for the organist up in the organ loft, there is no sound. There is no human ear to record it and to translate the waves into sound. Silence reigns below in the darkened and empty aisles. But if the musician continues playing and a congregation enters, all are caught in the flood of melody. Until the audience is there in the pews, it is as if there were no one at the organ. So with God. His spirit, his inspiration is eternal. It has always existed, even when matter was not organized into planetary systems and worlds and human beings and gnats, and it will always exist when all these things have dissolved—if they ever do dissolve. But it is only when conscious-

ness reaches a certain stage of development that his influence is felt.

In this world of ours, for instance, before man was sufficiently sensitized to record and respond to the impressions of God, it is as if God did not exist. The world was like the church before the congregation filed in. As man emerged from dumb brute, his organization reached a point of development where it began to record spiritual impressions and give evidence that he was influenced by them. He became dimly aware of some subtle, inspiring influence from without, something quite different from his usual sensations of appetite and anger and fear and self-interest. At first—probably for ages—this token of an outward grace was faintly and infrequently felt and

usually disregarded. The law of self-preservation controlled him to the exclusion of everything else. Gradually, however, the insistent call made its impression on man's consciousness as his nature developed and his ability to respond to the call of the spirit became more marked.

Then there came a point in his rise from the level of the brute when he gave a definite response to this influence. At that point his soul was born. At that point God at last found recognition. At that point the immaterial God began to influence nature through the soul of man in whom the immaterial and the material are combined. Thus man became the missing link between the wholly spiritual God, who was not the creator of material things and

hitherto had no relation to them, and the material world.

This is the record of how I have found God, a God without mystery or seeming contradictions or vagueness. All fear of him is dispelled because there is nothing punitive, nothing fearful in him, nothing of anger, and he is not a jealous God. He is not, for purposes or by methods which I cannot understand, putting me through a painful process of making, and testing me with trial for some ultimate purpose. On the contrary, he is always arrayed on my side in my unequal struggle with the world of matter, comforting me in trouble, inspiring me with courage and filling my soul with a divine inspiration and love.

CHAPTER IX

HOW can this concept of God be applied to life? How does it affect my attitude toward it? If we are not living in a God-created, material world, but in one made up of elements and forces wholly physical and nonspiritual, being ourselves partly physical and subject to the laws and phenomena of our physical surroundings, yet different from all other physical manifestations by having a spiritual element in us and a spiritual guiding force which animates many of our impulses and acts, what are the practical consequences of this new conception? How are we to regard the two worlds, of each of which we are a part? Man

and the two worlds! How is he to regard each?

Does this concept satisfactorily solve old problems, and does it create new ones? To me it has most emphatically solved all the old problems that were really important. It has not created new ones, but, on the contrary, has given a new guiding light to life. My relationship to each of the two worlds seems clear.

In regard to the physical world, I find that by denying the doctrine of fatalism I have every right to mold it, so far as I am able, "nearer to the heart's desire," to combat it where it endangers me, to overcome it where it impedes me and, in doing so. to have the help and inspiration of spiritual guidance.

If one regards the physical world

about us as the creation of an all-powerful God, the conclusion is inevitable that by studying its workings we can arrive at an idea of him who ordained its laws and was responsible for their results. From the character of the product we deduce the character of the producer. Hence, as we see, as consequences of the acts of nature, many results which have in them no elements of altruism, no quality of mercy or love, but, on the contrary, results which cause suffering and disaster, a concept of a Creator-God naturally and necessarily embues him with qualities of ruthlessness and cruelty. And with a God who can be at times ruthless and cruel, man naturally is influenced to be likewise, and as a result we have a hideous history of intolerance, op-

pression, and persecution. Think of the hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children who have been tortured and martyred in the name of God! Countless artificial restrictions and inhibitions have held men in their deadening clutch. The devil, fear, stalks abroad, driving before it the gentle, inspiring angel of the spirit. This element of fear has been, through all the ages, fostered by the priesthoods of nearly all religions. The Christian Church is insistent upon it, it constantly quotes the old Hebraic doctrine, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations." What a horrible conception of the essence of love! Absurd and fearful acts of propitiation are the

natural consequence of this element of fear in our relationship with God. The ceremony of sacrifice appears in many forms. In Hinduism, the devotee wastes his precious rice upon the altar and the Hindu mother casts her baby to the crocodiles of the Ganges. The Old Testament patriarchs slaughtered the bull and the sheep upon the altar and Father Abraham—whom I was taught as a child to venerate—led his own son up to the hilltop with the intent to murder him. This form of sacrifice was not inspired by unselfishness; it was not the generous act of deprivation for the good of one's fellows; there was no charity in it. It was an arbitrary and brutal, selfish sacrifice on the grotesque fancy that it would appease the wrath of God. Imagine a

wholly spiritual, loving God, the source of all that is unselfish and beautiful in the world, having any element of wrath and being appeased by such an act! Man has slowly and painfully learned to overcome many of the natural ills to which flesh is heir—hunger, cold, disease, and the attack of the elements, but he still is beset with the evils of religious intolerance. The fury of zealotry has only subsided as civilization has grown dimly to perceive that there is something fundamentally wrong with the tenets of hard-fixed creeds, though not knowing quite what it was.

In regard to the spiritual world, I have been able to rid myself completely of a mass of superstitions, creeds, arbitrary codes, and religious conventions which have always

rested, like a mountain, upon mankind. What a relief to sweep away the enormous mass of theology that has grown up through centuries, a vast, austere pile, a man-made monument standing between him and the sun of clear truth, keeping him forever in its shadow! Ecclesiasticism has, in its many forms, hampered man's progress, prevented his enlightenment, ruined his peace of mind, made him intolerant of his neighbor's ideas, clouded his charity, menaced his life, liberty, and happiness.

The theory of a God-created universe was responsible for a vast horde of mischief-making beliefs to plague and befoul our path as we struggle so slowly upward from darkness toward enlightenment; rigid creeds and

meaningless rituals and dogmatic statements which are mistaken for truths; prohibitions, taboos, damnation, fear of an angry God leading to monstrous sacrifices, humiliating confessions of sins, and propitiation; and more than all, a multitude of religious sects, all warring against one another and enslaving man. To the dangers and difficulties of our physical environment man has added even greater ones, of a spiritual nature, instead of relying on the spirit for help and frankly opening his heart and soul to its influence, which needs no revelation save that of an individual will and the saving grace of a spiritual response.

If, on the contrary, we conclude that we dwell in a world which is not of divine origin, our whole outlook

changes. We start fresh. We free ourselves from the old superstitions, the old dogmas and enslavements.

The problem of life becomes comparatively simple. It is for each individual to cultivate his response to the direct spiritual call which reaches each of us in a degree varying with our sensitiveness to it. Each act must be motivated in accordance with it. When confronted with the choice of two possible courses of action, we must choose the better. This is an act of will, just as it is an act of muscle to accomplish something in the physical world. Each time the will is exerted in choosing the better course it increases its power, just as the muscle's power is increased by use. By performing the nobler deed, we increase our

capacity to respond to the supernatural influence.

The problem of life is twofold. First, to recognize, to have faith in, and to follow the spiritual influence. Second, to increase our capacity to register it and to respond to it. Life, even in its lowest levels, is a constant choice of actions. The ignorant, very physical dweller in the slums choosing between two meannesses, in choosing the less mean rises, by doing so, to a higher plane of choices. Every individual has his foot upon the ladder. Each rung is an act of the will exerted in the performance of a generous rather than a selfish act, a deed of love rather than of hate, and the way is open for him to climb. Belief instead of disbelief, courage instead of fear, the impulse

to construct rather than to destroy, hope instead of mistrust—these lead to life more abundant. Man can thus modify the harshness of the physical world, lessen its cruelties, remedy its stupidities, and make it a better and happier living place for him.

CHAPTER X

WITH these conclusions arrived at, the problem of a proper conduct of life is solved by recognizing, yielding to, and following this spiritual guidance. Every human being has a soul, more or less developed, which is the spirit sounding board. Its sensitiveness is capable of cultivation even in the most debased or primitive. Every time we translate the message into a concrete act, choosing the more generous of two alternatives, we grow in grace. Incessant cultivation of the spirit is the course of true wisdom. Human experience grows more satisfactory as spiritual influences motivate our ac-

tions and are translated into life's activities.

Co-operation, as well as individual effort, is necessary. All of man's progress is greatest under wise co-operation. Organization spells power. All of civilization's great advances have thus been made. The institution of the Church exists for this purpose. In theory its mission is to co-ordinate and direct man's efforts toward spiritual enlightenment. Yet why has the Church so lamentably failed in its work? For failed it undoubtedly has to a very serious degree. We may disregard the work of the Church of other religions because the same cause that worked their inefficacy has militated against the usefulness of the Christian Church.

It were needless and a painful task—to recite in detail its failures. Founded in ignorance of the true teachings of him for whom it was named, built up upon dogma and intolerance, flourishing under a rule of fear and absolutism, guilty of countless intolerable persecutions, of pride, jealousy, and avarice, it is a monument of man-made laws, misstatements of fact, an enemy to science, and a slave to superstition and convention. Yet, interwoven through these evils, there are so many admirable qualities in the organization, so much that is helpful and stimulating, that it yet can be made a most effective organ for man's betterment.

It is governed by an army of priests and ministers who are, for the most part, men of high ideals, tireless

energy, and unselfishness. It could so easily become a true church of Christ if only it would awaken to a realization of its age-long error! To remedy a defect in the operation of an institution so full of latent possibilities, to remove the cause of its disability of leadership of men, is of supreme moment.

As I think of the vast failure of the Church in its control over men during the horrible years of the Great War, I feel that, as an institution, it must either be scrapped or revolutionized. To-day, in our great period of reconstruction, bordering so closely upon political, social, and spiritual chaos to men and nations, it still is impotent. Men feel this more or less definitely and are learning more and more to disregard it.

The first thing the Christian Church should do is to embrace Christianity! Christ, so far as we can learn from the inaccurate and often contradictory and prejudiced selections from a mass of hearsay testimony and belated chronicles, lived in a fever heat of eagerness to stimulate men to receive the spirit. He utterly disregarded the letter, had no patience with Old Testament theology or Hebraic "thou shalt nots" and was a living protest to a materialistic point of view. God is a spirit, he taught, and should be worshiped in spirit and in truth. But the Christian Church has, since its foundation, persisted in observing the letter, persisted in being materialistic. It attempts to carry on the worship of God by rites and cere-

monies, creeds and dogmas, to which its adherents are compelled to subscribe. It loses itself in meaningless and unnecessary ceremonies to please, praise, and placate a supposedly jealous and quick-to-anger God instead of finding itself in bringing an all-loving God close to man. The Church persists in the teaching of an anthropomorphic God, a God of wrath and hate. "Anthropomorphic" means "in the likeness of man." But man is partly material, or physical, and only partly spiritual. Therefore an anthropomorphic God is partly material or physical and only partly spiritual!

The Church has also developed a preposterous train of arbitrary beliefs, such as damnation, predestination, fatalism, absurdly detailed

descriptions of a definite heaven, and countless others, none of which Christ ever dreamed of. Imagine the gentle, simple-living, luxury-hating Galilean, living frugally among the lowly, full of infinite sorrow for the sorrows of others, full of charity and love, flaming with an eagerness to show how short and how clear is the path to spiritual enlightenment, being confronted with the pomps and ceremony and the intricate theology of the Church of today and being told that it is his interpreter and servant!

Christ strove to overthrow the anthropomorphic God of the Hebrews, having so many qualities which belong only to the physical world and bring to men's hearts and minds a consciousness of a wholly spiritual

Deity. Yet the Church that has had the temerity to take its name from this supreme spiritual seer still propagates the ancient errors, still clings to the old superstitions.

The Church will fulfill its functions and gain a true influence over intelligent men only when it purges itself absolutely of the letter and of the flesh and cleaves wholly to the spirit, when it eschews its claim of an anthropomorphic God and sees him as spirit. It will only fulfill its functions as a leader of men when it follows Christ's method for the proper conduct of life. Man needs a practical method of overcoming his physical inheritance and combating the forces of nature. The inhibitions, the negative commandments of the Church do not do this. Christ's method was

to so fill our lives with right-doing that no room would be left for wrong-doing. The constant practice of unselfishness crowds out selfishness. By right acts, I mean acts that are in conformity with spiritual influences rather than material examples, acts which are constructive, helpful, neighbor-loving.

Christ realized the entirely spiritual quality of God, and his supreme statement was, "*God is love.*" He realized this by noting the nature of the spiritual influence on the human heart and he knew that the only successful method of life is the translation of the spiritual impulses into concrete, definite acts.

Unless the Church is willing to eschew its arbitrary traditions and follow unreservedly the true teach-

ings of its founder, it will continue its failure as a leader of men and deprive men of the vast help they should derive from intelligent, organized control. The world is crying out—so far in vain—for a Church with the courage to overthrow the whole smothering mass of ecclesiastical impedimenta and theological complexities and emerge free and clear of ancient shackles to proclaim truly its divine message of sweetness and light and show man the true path which he has for so long blindly, yet persistently, tried to follow.

CHAPTER XI

THIS conception of God as pure spirit, not responsible for conditions in the natural world, and powerless to control them, gives me a new and satisfying conception of the nature and function of prayer.

The impulse to pray is both intensely human and intensely divine. It came, presumably, long ages ago, when man's consciousness reached a point of development where it first answered to the call of the spirit and it is a token of this response. But true prayer is, to me, an attitude, not a ceremony, a response, not an importunity. It is the privilege of uncovering my soul-sounding-board to the harmony of the spiritual in-

fluence, recognizing God's immediate presence. It is necessary and natural to the human soul. It does not consist of perfunctory praise or more or less selfish beseechments for definite material things; it is not an intermittent or periodic function, but a constant effort to keep one's heart open to the influence of the spirit.

This may not seem a very clear definition of prayer, but how can one define a thing which must and should, in its form, at least, vary with each individual? To one, words, even ceremonies, may be necessary to formulate and clarify thoughts, longings, and desires for help and guidance by the spirit; to another, an incessant attitude of alertness to its call and a constant endeavor to act in accordance with it may suffice.

To me, the usual oratorical pulpit efforts are far removed from my conception of prayer.

It is human nature to turn to prayer in times of stress, to voice one's fears and ask for deliverance from danger, but is not this form of prayer oftentimes human weakness? Should not prayer be, when, because of circumstances, it must be an asking, should it not be an asking for grace to understand trouble and grief and danger and an effort to become more conscious of and sympathetic with the spiritual influence? Surely one may expect a mystical help from prayer, an inspiration to combat, and a strength to meet and overcome, so far as possible, the dangers and evils existent in the world of matter, of which we are so

largely a part. But prayer is far more than a refuge and a solace. It is a constant habit of keeping one's heart open to the enkindling and purifying appeal of God's love.

A wireless telephone receiver can only catch the sound waves of music or the spoken word by attuning itself to the waves of sound that are sent out from the broadcasting station. Unless the proper wave length is found there is only silence. One may sit with the receivers at his ears, and there will be silence till the dial on the instrument is moved to the point where the coil can vibrate to the sound waves that are coming. Then the music is heard, the words understood. So this divine influence is always streaming toward us, striving to be recorded, but until the

dial of our consciousness is moved to the point where our spiritual receiver is attuned to the message, there is, to us, silence. But when we respond, then is the divine word heard.

Personally, I do not find it necessary to have a picture in mind of God in a definite form, an anthropomorphic individual. I can set no limitations upon the personality of God. I cannot conceive of his form any more than I can conceive of the form of electricity. I believe in the power of electricity, but I do not have to think of it in anthropomorphic form. Likewise in listening over the wireless, we hear the speaker but do not see him. Nor do we need to. It is his message that interests us, and by what he says we may judge him. We do not care whether

he is tall or short, dark or light. He is at a distance, but he becomes present with us. So, when we are conscious of God's presence, we do not need to picture his person. He becomes present, nevertheless, with us. By his message we shall know him, by his influence we can realize what he is.

CHAPTER XII

THE question of immortality is not, strictly, a corollary of this idea of God. As I have said before, I do not attempt an explanation of all the many puzzling aspects of religious speculation. My theory of time, for instance, is, to me, a satisfying enough argument that neither matter nor spirit had any beginning or has any end, a theory borne out by the statement of physicists that force is indestructible and that force and matter are practically one. So, in thinking of the immortality of man, I feel that, as he is made up of those two components, matter and spirit, he necessarily is immortal, though not, perhaps, immortal in the

way the word is usually used. At death, his body gradually, by nature's chemistry, resolves itself back into the ingredients from which it came. It becomes, in various forms, solids, liquids, and gases again, and these are, like all matter, indestructible. So that we can say that man's body is, in a way, immortal. Man's spirit is likewise forever existent. As to the survival of personality, that is a different matter. Of course it is the dearest wish of most of us mortals, I suppose, to retain our personality after physical death. Most religions teach that there is a place of departed spirits, and the belief is general that in that far limbo one is privileged to be reunited with his relatives and friends of this world.

But when we really think about it,

what do we mean by the survival of personality? Our personality is so involved with our physical make-up that it is hard for me to picture what it would be without all the muscle habits and appetites and bodily sensations of this world. In the body we have hunger and thirst, which are material; the sense of heat and cold and danger and consequent fear or courage, which are also physical; sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, equilibrium, and those other senses which modern physiological psychologists have isolated, are all physical. We have ambitions—or lack of ambition—concerning our physical advancement in comfort and power and fame. We have those dependent upon us for whom we must care, or we are ourselves dependent upon

others; we have tastes as to colors and music and things literary and artistic; tastes as to travel and work and play—all of which make up our personality and which are certainly closely associated with the physical; we have moral scruples different in every individual, influenced by our everyday life.

I try, I confess in vain, to imagine what I would be like—what my personality would be—if all these associations were suddenly removed from me at the moment of physical death, my consciousness remaining. With the law of gravitation no longer applying to me, with all my muscle habits and appetites and physical sensations, emotions, and passions removed, what would there be left of ME? I cannot see how it

is possible for anyone to picture to himself what he and his associates would be like in the spirit world.

So it seems to me that all speculations upon a future state of personal existence are not only futile, but must surely lead to confusion. Take, for example, the heaven that is taught in our Christian Sunday schools as a city of fair mansions, golden streets, and pearly gates where we may rejoin those of our family and friends who have gone on before. Grant that the references to golden streets and pearly gates, to angels with wings, to Miltonian cherubim and seraphim are symbolic and mere imagery, still the belief in the meeting with loved ones remains because it is human nature to long to be with them

again. But let us take a specific case and see how it would work out.

The loving mother dreams of meeting her dear children in the hereafter. It would certainly seem cruel to weaken in the slightest this most natural and instinctive desire. But suppose the mother dies at thirty-five, in the beauty and strength of her young womanhood, and her chubby-faced boy lives to be eighty and dies a senile old man. How would they meet? Would she still have the personality of a young woman and he that of an aged man? Even if we believed that there was some system by which each individual, as he arrived in heaven, would be set forward in age a few years, or backward, at some ideal point in his maturity, how could these two meet

as mother and child? The very personality that the mother longed for —the innocent infant, dependent upon her for everything—would not be found in the mature man that greeted her. One can think of innumerable other cases, but it seems to me that the lapse of years, and the changes they bring to our characters and personalities on earth, would make such a difference in all relationships—grandparents, parents, and children—that only confusion results when we really try to picture this definite form of immortality.

As I said, it seems cruel to weaken in the slightest this emotional, natural longing, born of love, which is almost universal in the human heart for a personal life after death. The subject is too tender and idealistic,

perhaps, for philosophic discussion. It lies too close to the heart to be a proper subject for a cold mental test.

So, to the question, "Is man immortal?" I must first ask, "What do you mean by immortality?" If you mean, "Does his body and soul survive death?" I would say, "yes." The body is a part of the material world, which is indestructible; the soul is a part of the spiritual world, which also is indestructible. In that way man is immortal. As to the survival of personality, I confess that for myself I cannot imagine what one's spiritual personality would be like when separated from the body, but that, since my soul is a very part of God, who is the quintessence of divine love, mercy, and

charity, I am content to face life as it is here about me, filled with infinite possibilities to happiness, and am content with the great task of making it, as Christ has told us how, more abundant. We are already immortal. As for the details of the future, that belongs to the realm of dreams and surely to dream is the happy privilege of us all.

THE END